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Why Public Is in the Dark About CIA

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By Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

On Jan. 24, 1966, the U.S. Senate in the second closed-door session since World War II voted 61 to 28 not to permit other Senators except the Armed Services Committee to ride herd on the secret activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

If that vote had been different, the country might not have been so surprised by recent disclosures that some $3 million of the taxpayers' money had been spent by CIA to subsidize various student organizations represented to the public as spontaneous youth movements organized in the spirit of American free enterprise. Investigation by other Senators besides the pro-military Armed Services Committee would have disclosed this subsidy.

During the secret debate, Sen. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), contended that the CIA played a more influential role in foreign policy than the State Department; therefore his Senate Foreign Relations Committee members should be informed of the CIA's activities.

Standing near Fulbright and striking his right fist into his left palm with a loud crack, Sen. Richard Russell (D-Ga.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, blasted the Foreign Relations Committee as "self-serving, self-seeking."

Russell demanded that the resolution to permit the Foreign Relations Committee to participate in supervision of CIA be referred to his committee, where of course it was certain to be killed.

Vice President Humphrey, usually a liberal, ruled against his liberal colleagues. He won the day for Russell and his conservatives.

Ten years before, the Senate had also voted, 59 to 27, to defeat a proposal by Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), now Senate Leader, to create a joint Congressional committee to oversee the CIA. The then-Senate Leader from Texas, now President of the United States, voted against this checkrein on Central Intelligence.

Public Doesn't Know

Since other members of the Senate and the public have been denied access to the operations of Central Intelligence, this column will undertake to report on some of them—without disclosing the more delicate operations which might involve national security.

Unquestionably the CIA has some notable accomplishments to its credit, such as spotting the arrival of Russian missiles in Cuba, preventing the pro-Communist take-over of the Congo, predicting the Chinese development of nuclear weapons, predicting the fall of Premier Ben Bella of Algeria (and possibly arranging it); and the campaign to elect pro-American President Magsaysay in the Philippines.

But here are some of the lesser known incidents, now history, which might have been prevented if the CIA had been answerable to Congressional scrutiny, as is every other U.S. agency under our traditional system of government by checks and balances.

In September, 1965, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore charged that a CIA agent was caught trying to buy intelligence information from a Singapore official and that, in order to hush up the matter, Premier Lee had been offered $5 million by Central Intelligence. State Department officials denied Lee's charge, whereupon he produced a letter from Secretary of State Rusk, written in 1961, apologizing for the attempted bribe.

• In Cambodia, CIA agents got involved in an attempt to overthrow Prince Sihanouk's government. Ever since that time the Prince has been vigorously anti-American.

• In Costa Rica, in the fall of 1958, Jose Figueres, married to a Brooklyn woman but considered liberal by CIA standards, was campaigning for President. Figueres was critical of the United Fruit Co., which has cooperated closely with Central Intelligence. A CIA agent put a tap on Figueres's phone. It was detected and the CIA agent caught.

Figueres was elected President of Costa Rica on Nov. 8. He continued to be friendly to the United States despite Central Intelligence and despite the fact that he always suspected the CIA agents had conspired with Nicaraguan conservative exiles to invade Costa Rica on Jan. 11, 1955. The invaders were forced to withdraw by the Organization of American States.

These are just a few of the subterranean operations of Central Intelligence, which the American people have paid for but have not known about. They are operations which have damaged American prestige abroad. More of these incidents will be reported in a future column.

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